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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
13 August 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Insurgency in South Vietnam and Laos

1. South Vietnam

a. Viet Cong attacks declined in early August as compared with the rate in the latter part of July. In addition to the usual targets of strategic hamlets and Civil Guard/Self Defense Corps outposts, it has been noted that members of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group--the armed local militias which receive some US training, particularly as strategic hamlet guards--have been increasingly targets of attack. This suggests that the Viet Cong are concerned over the increasing effectiveness of this group, and there is some evidence that the Communists may reinforce their units in areas near the militia training camps.

b. A recent study by USMACV shows that there was a significant drop in Viet Cong activity, including attacks, during the first six months of 1963 as compared with the same period in 1962. During the same period there was also a reduction in the number of larger size Viet Cong attacks. This decline probably reflects both the increased effectiveness of government military operations and a growing tendency of the Viet Cong to conserve their larger units rather than risk them in current operations.

c. There is further evidence regarding the Viet Cong effort to build up support elements for its skeletal regimental structures, four of which have been identified. There is still little evidence that the Viet Cong have made substantial progress in developing or equipping regimental structures beyond the stage reached in 1962.

JCS review(s)
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d. Reports of coup plotting have abated since late July, but a rash of Buddhist suicides--apparently without sanction of the Buddhist leadership--and inflammatory statements by Diem's sister-in-law Madame Nhu have kept the situation tense, and an early settlement of the issue continues doubtful.

2. Laos

a. Heavy rains in Laos have hampered movements by the opposing forces; recent actions have been limited to sporadic skirmishes and artillery exchanges. In south Laos (4th Military Region), FAR forces are planning mop-up campaigns against pockets of Pathet Lao near the Mekong. Limited initial efforts have produced few results so far.

b. Meo operations to harass Route 7 were stepped up during the past week. The major Meo activity occurred to the east and west of Ban Ban. These actions, coupled with bad weather, should have the effect of reducing the Pathet Lao's capability in the Plaine des Jarres area, at least temporarily.

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